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PTQ1295

RELEASED IN PART
B6, B1, 1.4(D)

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ACTION ARA-01

INFO	LOG-00	ACDA-08	ACDE-00	DOEE-00	SRPP-00	DS-00	H-01
	TEDE-00	INR-00	L-01	ADS-00	NSAE-00	NSCE-00	OMB-01
	OPIC-01	PA-00	PM-00	PRS-00	P-00	CIO-00	SP-00
	TRSE-00	T-00	PMB-00	DSCC-00	PRM-10	PRME-01	DRL-04
	G-00	NFAT-00	SAS-00	/028W			

-----15CBCB 301944Z /38

R 301917Z JAN 98
FM AMEMBASSY CARACAS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9548
INFO AMEMBASSY BOGOTA
AMEMBASSY LA PAZ
AMEMBASSY LIMA
AMEMBASSY QUITO
USINT HAVANA
CIA WASHDC
DIA WASHDC
SECDEF WASHDC
USCINCSO MIAMI FL
USIA WASHDC 1398

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 CARACAS 000265

E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/26/08
TAGS: PGOV, PREL, VE
SUBJECT: RED BERETS AND CHE-ESQUE POSTERS: HUGO CHAVEZ REGISTERS
PARTY AND CLAIMS TO BE GAINING MOMENTUM

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REF: (A) 97 CARACAS 4453, (B) CARACAS 254

CLASSIFIED BY
REASONS 1.5(B) AND (D)

SUMMARY

1. (C) FORMER COUP LEADER AND CURRENT PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE HUGO CHAVEZ REGISTERED HIS PARTY, MOVEMENT FOR THE FIFTH REPUBLIC (MVR),

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF STATE n/a
REVIEW AUTHORITY: OSCAR J OLSON CONFIDENTIAL
CLASSIFICATION: CONFIDENTIAL REASON: 1.4(D)
DECLASSIFY AFTER: 29 JAN 2023
DATE/CASE ID: 15 JUL 2009 200503654

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ON JANUARY 15. IN SUPPORT OF HIS REGISTRATION, CHAVEZ SUBMITTED PETITIONS WITH 100,000 SIGNATURES TO THE SUPREME ELECTORAL COUNCIL (CSE). AT RALLIES FOLLOWING THE REGISTRATION, CHAVEZ WORE A MILITARY-STYLE UNIFORM FOR CAMPAIGNING, AND DISPLAYED CAMPAIGN POSTERS DEPICTING CHAVEZ IN A CHE-ESQUE POSE. MANY OF CHAVEZ' SUPPORTERS WORE RED MILITARY-STYLE BERETS TO SHOW SUPPORT FOR THE EX-COUP LEADER. IN REMARKS AT THE RALLIES, CHAVEZ CONTINUED HIS ANTI-DEMOCRATIC RHETORIC: CALLING FOR A DISSOLUTION OF CONGRESS AND THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY. [REDACTED]

B1

HIS POPULARITY IN THE POLLS HAS GROWN SOMEWHAT (REFTEL B), AND IS NOW IN A PACK OF SEVERAL CANDIDATES STRUGGLING FOR SECOND PLACE. HE POLLED 6.8 PERCENT IN A NATIONAL POLL AND 15 PERCENT IN A CARACAS POLL (REFTEL B). CHAVEZ BELIEVES THAT FRONT-RUNNER IRENE SAEZ HAS SLUMPED INTO AN UNSTOPPABLE DECLINE IN THE POLLS, A CLAIM WHICH IS NOT SUPPORTED BY SURVEY INFORMATION (REFTEL B). END SUMMARY.

REGISTERING MVR

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2. (U) ON JANUARY 15, CHAVEZ SUBMITTED PETITIONS TO THE CSE TO REGISTER MVR. CHAVEZ CLAIMS TO HAVE COLLECTED MORE THAN TWICE THE NECESSARY SIGNATURES (OVER 100,000) TO REGISTER HIS PARTY. CHAVEZ SUBMITTED PETITIONS FROM ALL EXCEPT FOUR OF VENEZUELA'S 23 STATES; PETITIONS FROM THE REMAINING STATES, HE DECLARED, WILL BE SUBMITTED BY THE END OF JANUARY.

3. (U) ACCORDING TO A JANUARY 16 "EL NACIONAL" ARTICLE, CHAVEZ SUPPORTERS, WHO RALLIED AT CSE HEADQUARTERS WHILE THE REGISTRATON PETITIONS WERE DELIVERED, SPORTED RED, MILITARY-STYLE BERETS. ONE SUPPORTER WHO CARRIED A LOUDSPEAKER CALLED ON THE CROWD OF 200-300 TO SUPPORT THE ONE WHO "EMBODIES THE POPULAR DISCONTENT." A PHOTOGRAPH OF THE RALLY IN THE JANUARY 16 EDITION OF "EL UNIVERSAL" SHOWS YOUNG CHILDREN IN RED BERETS HOLDING CAMPAIGN POSTERS. DEPICTING CHAVEZ IN A RED BERET. THESE CAMPAIGN POSTERS ARE REMINISCENT OF CHE GUEVARA POSTERS. ESCHEWING A BUSINESS SUIT, CHAVEZ HIMSELF ARRIVED AT THE RALLY IN A LIQUI-LIQUI, A TRADITIONAL VENZUELAN SUIT.

"NOW, CHAVEZ"

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4. (U) CHAVEZ' PRESIDENCIAL CAMPAIGN HAS ADOPTED THE SLOGAN "NOW, CHAVEZ." THIS SLOGAN REFERS TO CHAVEZ' STATEMENT DURING A FEBRUARY 4, 1992 TELEVISION INTERVIEW WHEN CHAVEZ SURRENDERED, ADMITTING THAT HIS COUP ATTEMPT HAD NOT MET ITS OBJECTIVES "FOR NOW." IN HIS JANUARY 11 "EL NACIONAL" INTERVIEW, CHAVEZ STATED "NOW WE GO TO THE ELECTIONS BECAUSE THERE IS A CHANCE TO WIN THIS BATTLE, BUT WITH

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THE SAME OBJECTIVE: TO TAKE THE MIRAFLORES (PRESIDENTIAL PALACE) WITH OTHER ARMS AND TO ACTIVATE THE POWER OF THE CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY (CONSTITUYENTE)."

5. (U) CHAVEZ STATED, "I AM NOT A COUP LEADER. IT IS ONE THING TO LAUNCH AN ARMED REBELLION, AND ANOTHER THING TO BE A COUP LEADER," REPORTED "EL UNIVERSAL" ON JANUARY 14. IN HIS JANUARY 11 "EL NACIONAL" INTERVIEW, CHAVEZ INDICATED THAT, IN OPTING TO PARTICIPATE IN THE ELECTIONS, HE IS MERELY CHANGING TACTICS TO ACHIEVE THE SAME OBJECTIVES AS HIS 1992 "PATRIOTIC REBELLION." CHAVEZ ALSO CALLED UPON VENEZUELAN, WHO ARE NOW CELEBRATING FORTY YEARS OF DEMOCRACY, TO INSTEAD CELEBRATE THE SIXTH ANNIVERSARY OF THE "PATRIOTIC REBELLION" ON FEBRUARY 4, 1992.

6. (U) CHAVEZ BELIEVES HE CAN WIN IN A LANDSLIDE IF HE CAN MOBILIZE THE "FORTY PERCENT OF ABSTAINERS." ATTEMPTING TO SECURE THE SUPPORT OF THOSE WHO INDICATE TO POLLSTERS "FOR NOW, FOR NOBODY," "EL NACIONAL" REPORTED ON JANUARY 11 THAT CHAVEZ DECLARED, "WE CAME FROM THIS MASS OF ABSTAINERS. WE ARE MOBILIZING SECTORS THAT NEVER VOTED AND NOW WILL. FOR THIS TIME, OUR MOTTO IS NO LONGER 'FOR NOW' BUT 'NOW, YES.'"

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	OMB-01	OPIC-01	PA-00	PM-00	PRS-00	P-00	CIO-00
	SP-00	TRSE-00	T-00	PMB-00	DSCC-00	DRL-04	G-00
	NFAT-00	SAS-00	/018W				

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R 301917Z JAN 98
FM AMEMBASSY CARACAS

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9549
INFO AMEMBASSY BOGOTA
AMEMBASSY LA PAZ
AMEMBASSY LIMA
AMEMBASSY QUITO
USINT HAVANA
CIA WASHDC
DIA WASHDC
SECDEF WASHDC
USCINCSO MIAMI FL
USIA WASHDC 1399

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 02 OF 03 CARACAS 000265

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7. (U) CHAVEZ CLAIMS TO HAVE A NATIONAL ORGANIZATION HEADED BY 100 PEOPLE WHO LEAD "DIRECTION CELLS." THESE CELLS ARE WORKING TO MOBILIZE THE DISCONTENTED POPULACE. STATING HE IS USING MILITARY PRINCIPLES TO SELECT HIS TARGETS CAREFULLY, CHAVEZ STATED THAT CURRENTLY MVR'S ONLY OBJECTIVE IS HIS CANDIDACY FOR PRESIDENCY. NONETHELESS, HE INDICATED, "OTHER MILITARY POINTS (UNDER CONSIDERATION) ARE THE (GOVERNORSHIPS OF) ARAGUA, CARABOBO, ZULIA, (AND) LARA STATES."

CELEBRATING THE FUNERAL OF THE CORRUPTOCRACY

8. (U) AT A CAMPAIGN RALLY, CHAVEZ DECLARED, "I DID NOT REBEL AGAINST DEMOCRACY, BECAUSE ONE CANNOT REBEL AGAINST WHAT DOES NOT EXIST," REPORTED "EL UNIVERSAL" ON JANUARY 24. THE RALLY WAS HELD ON JANUARY 23, THE ANNIVERSARY OF THE ESTABLISHMENT OF DEMOCRACY IN VENEZUELA, AND TOOK PLACE IN TWENTY-THIRD OF JANUARY PARISH OF CARACAS. APPEARING BEFORE A CROWD IN A RED BERET, KHAKI WORK SHIRT, KHAKI UTILITY VEST, AND OLIVE DRAB PANTS, CHAVEZ EXORTED, "WHAT DEMOCRACY? HERE THERE IS ONLY A DICTATORSHIP DISGUISED AS DEMOCRACY. . . . I WILL NEVER REPENT FOR HAVING (LAUNCHED A COUP ATTEMPT), BECAUSE THIS IS NOT A DEMOCRACY, BUT RATHER A CORRUPTOCRACY." CHAVEZ ANNOUNCED THAT HE WOULD LEAD A SERIES OF

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RALLIES IN THE FEDERAL DISTRICT, AND ARAGUA, MIRANDA, AND CARABOBO STATES. ON FEBRUARY 4, HE DECLARED HE WOULD LEAD A RALLY OF 50,000 FOLLOWERS IN CARACAS' CENTRAL PLAZA TO CELEBRATE THE SIXTH ANNIVERSARY OF HIS COUP ATTEMPT, AND THE "FUNERAL OF THE CORRUPTOCRACY."

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THE POLLS: STRONG SUPPORT AMONG THE MILITARY?

9. (U) CHAVEZ DECLARED, IN AN INTERVIEW PRINTED IN THE CARACAS DAILY "EL NACIONAL" ON JANUARY 11, THAT HIS POLLSTER "EXPLAINED THAT THE FALL OF IRENE SAEZ CAN NO LONGER BE STOPPED." HE CONTINUED STATING, ". . . I ALSO HAVE IN MY HANDS A POLL BY THE NATIONAL ARMED FORCES (FAN) THAT GIVES THE MAYOR A FALL FROM 40 TO 27 PERCENT IN LESS THAN THREE MONTHS. AND WE, WHO THREE MONTHS AGO WERE AT 4 PERCENT, APPEAR AT 17 PERCENT. AND THAT IS A POLL DONE BY THE MILITARY, BY THE JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF OF THE FAN." THE CARACAS DAILY "EL UNIVERSAL" ON JANUARY 14, QUOTED CHAVEZ SAYING HIS PRESIDENCIAL CANDIDACY "IS GROWING IN A VERY VIGOROUS MANNER." HE ASSERTED TO "EL UNIVERSAL" THAT HIS CAMPAIGN IS "ONLY 5 POINTS" AWAY FROM FRONT-RUNNER IRENE SAEZ. BOTH CARACAS DAILIES REPORTED THAT CHAVEZ SAID, "THE PEOPLE ARE NOTICING THAT BEHIND (FRONT-RUNNER IRENE) SAEZ IS THE NEFARIOUS FIGURE OF EX-PRESIDENT LUIS HERRERA CAMPINS."

10. (U) "EL UNIVERSAL" REPORTED IN A SEPARATE ARTICLE ON JANUARY 14 THAT MINISTER OF DEFENSE VICE ADMIRAL TITO RINCON BRAVO, APPEARING "VISIBLY BOTHERED," DECLARED CHAVEZ'S REPORT TO BE "COMPLETELY FALSE." RINCON CONTINUED THAT CHAVEZ DESIRED A FIGHT, AND WISHES TO MEDDLE POLITICALLY IN THE FAN. RINCON CONCLUDED BY ASKING RHETORICALLY WHAT THE INTENTION OF THE FAN WOULD BE TO CONDUCT SUCH A POLL. (COMMENT: MEMBERS OF THE MILITARY ARE NOT PERMITTED TO VOTE. END COMMENT.) "EL NACIONAL" ON JANUARY 14 REPORTED RINCON STATED, "IN THE FAN, POLITICAL POLLS ARE NOT CARRIED OUT, THE FAN IS ESSENTIALLY APOLITICAL AND NOT

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DELIBERATIVE." "EL UNIVERSAL" REPORTED ON JANUARY 16, THAT CHAVEZ, WHILE SUBMITTING PETITIONS TO REGISTER HIS PARTY, INSISTED THAT THE FAN HAD CONDUCTED THE POLL. (COMMENT: CREDIBLE POLLING PLACES CHAVEZ' SUPPORT AT APPROXIMATELY 15 PERCENT OF THE ELECTORATE,

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COMPARED WITH 35 PERCENT FOR IRENE SAEZ, 12 PERCENT FOR CLAUDIO FERMIN, AND 10 PERCENT FOR HENRIQUE SALAS ROMER. (REFTEL B))

STILL NO CONCRETE PLAN

11. (U) DURING HIS JANUARY 11 "EL NACIONAL" INTERVIEW, THE INTERVIEWING JOURNALISTS PUSHED HARD FOR CHAVEZ TO EXPLAIN SOME OF THE CONCRETE STEPS HE WOULD TAKE IF ELECTED. CHOSING TO RESPOND IN METAPHOR, CHAVEZ SAID, "WE WANT TO BUILD A BUILDING OVER A SWAMP, EVEN THOUGH THE BLOCKS AND BEAMS APPEAR TO BE MADE OF GOLD." IN RESPONSE TO FOLLOW-UP QUESTIONS SEEKING SOMETHING CONCRETE, CHAVEZ RETORTED, "YOU CANNOT DENY ME THE RIGHT TO SPEAK IN METAPHOR."

12. (U) ONCE AGAIN, CHAVEZ PREFERED TO OUTLINE A VAGUE, MULTI-STEP PLAN TO SAVE VENEZUELA. IN HIS JANUARY 11 "EL NACIONAL" INTERVIEW, CHAVEZ STATED THE FIRST, OR "ELIMINATORY," PHASE OF HIS

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INFO	LOG-00	ACDA-08	ACDE-00	DOEE-00	SRPP-00	DS-00	H-01
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	NSCE-00	OMB-01	OPIC-01	PA-00	PM-00	PRS-00	P-00
	CIO-00	SP-00	TRSE-00	T-00	PMB-00	DSCC-00	DRL-04
	G-00	NFAT-00	SAS-00	/019W			

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R 301917Z JAN 98
FM AMEMBASSY CARACAS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9550
INFO AMEMBASSY BOGOTA
AMEMBASSY LA PAZ
AMEMBASSY LIMA
AMEMBASSY QUITO
USINT HAVANA
CIA WASHDC
DIA WASHDC
SECDEF WASHDC
USCINCSO MIAMI FL
USIA WASHDC 1400

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STRATEGY IS TO "DEMOLISH WHAT WE CAN" IN ORDER TO BUILD A "SOCIAL FORCE." DURING THIS "ELIMINATORY" PHASE, HE WILL REVIEW JUDICIAL POWER, LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLIES, AND DECENTRALIZATION. THE SECOND, OR "CONTRACTUAL" PHASE, WILL BE COMPLETED BY "THE SIGNING OF A CONTRACT ON DECEMBER 8, 1998 (ELECTION DAY)" BETWEEN THE VICTORIOUS CHAVEZ AND THE ELECTORATE.

13. (U) CHAVEZ ANTICIPATES THAT THE THIRD, OR "CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY," PHASE WILL LAST ABOUT FOUR MONTHS. DURING THIS PERIOD, CHAVEZ WILL PROPOSE, AND A CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY WILL DEBATE "A PROJECT WHICH WILL BE DISCUSSED NATIONALLY." THE FOURTH PHASE WILL CONSIST OF THE EXECUTION OF THE "NATIONAL PROJECT." THE FIFTH AND MOST VAGUE PHASE WILL BE THE EMERGENCE OF A NEW ECONOMIC PROJECT. CHAVEZ STATED, "I WOULD DECLARE AN EMERGENCY GOVERNMENT AND WE WILL SET THE ECONOMIC THEME THROUGH A REVIEW OF THE BUDGET. WE WILL REVIEW CONTRACTS OF FOREIGN DEBT. . . . THERE ARE VARIOUS ALTERNATIVES: ONE IS TO NOT PAY . . . ; ANOTHER WAY IS TO ACHIEVE A THREE YEAR DELAY (ON PAYMENTS) . . . ; TO REDUCE BY TWENTY PERCENT THE LEVEL OF SPENDING BY (STATE OIL COMPANY) PDVSA; TO USE PART OF THE INTERNATIONAL RESERVES FOR SOCIAL PROJECTS. I BELIEVE THAT THE SOCIAL DEBT NEEDS TO BE PAID BEFORE THE EXTERNAL DEBT."

COMMENT

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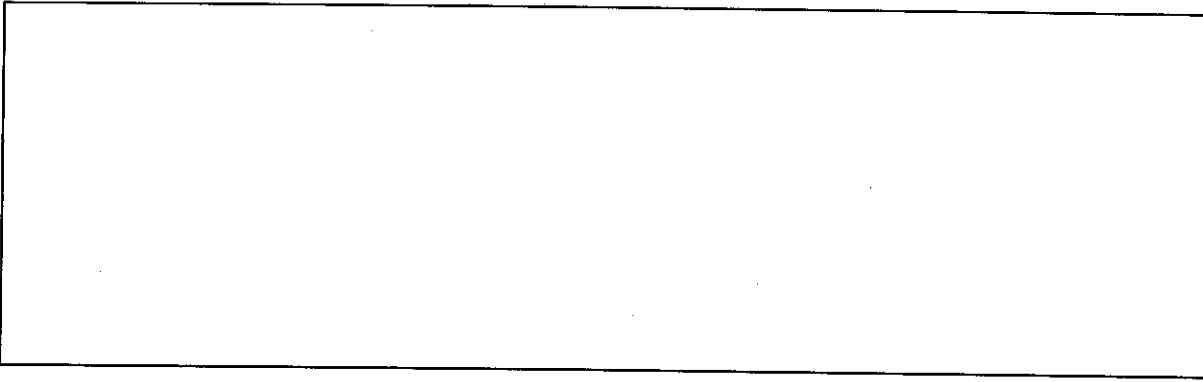
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